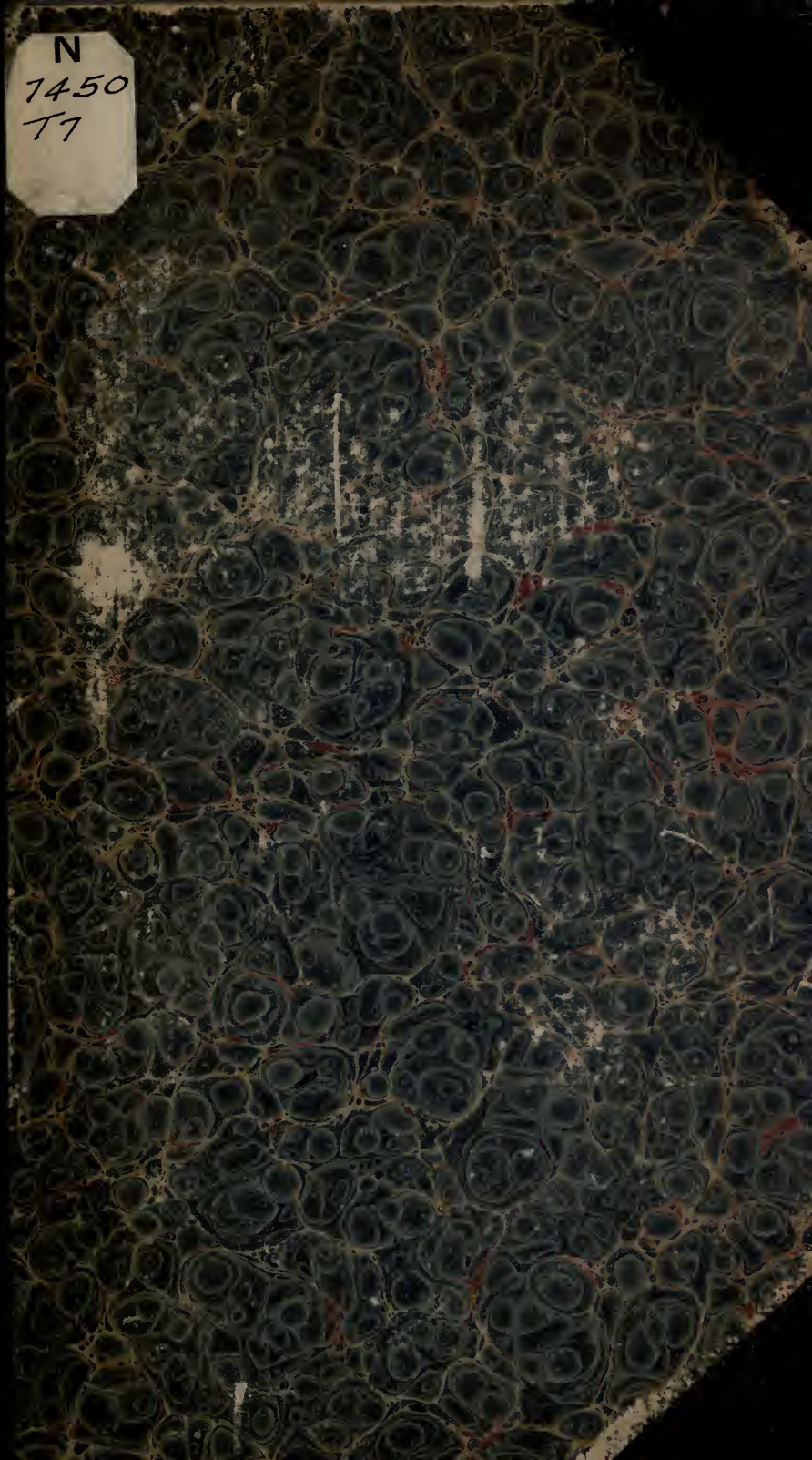


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We have just received

"An essay on the use and advantages of the fine arts.

"Delivered at the Public Commencement, in New Haven

Sept. 12th-1770.

Printed by T. and J. Green"

[Anonymous]

Can you kindly inform me as to authorship?

By John Mumtull, the poet.

Yours to command

J C Rowell

Librarian

Sept. 12. 98









AN ESSAY

ON THE

USE AND ADVANTAGES

OF THE

FINE ARTS.

DELIVERED AT THE

PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT;

IN NEW-HAVEN:

SEPTEMBER 12TH. 1770.



By  
John Trumbull  
the poet.

NEW-HAVEN:

PRINTED BY T. AND S. GREEN;

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Y A S S E W A

ON THE

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OF THE

FINE ARTS.

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## AN ESSAY, &amp;c.

**N**O subject can be more important in itself, or better suited to the present occasion, and the exercises of this day, than the Use and Advantages of the fine Arts, and especially those of Polite Literature. These studies are perhaps too much undervalued by the public, and neglected by the youth in our seminaries of science. They are considered as meer matters of trifling amusement, and despised in comparison with the more solid branches of Learning.

The knowledge of Languages, Mathematics, Metaphysics and Philosophy, undoubtedly deserves to engage the attention of the greatest Genius. For skill in these sciences, the World (while the world remains) will revere the memory of a Bacon, a Newton, and a Locke. But when they are carried beyond a certain point; when they are of no advantage to the common purposes of life; when they are employed upon questions which human Reason can never with certainty determine, they degenerate into meer speculations of amusement, and become no farther valuable, than as they serve to enlarge the mind, clear the understanding, and entertain us in the hours of leisure from the important avocations of business. The Geometrical labours  
for

for the Quadrature of the Circle, the Metaphysical controversies about the Existence of matter, and the Essence of Spirit, though a field for the display of genius, in what are they more interesting to mankind, than the contentions of Antiquaries about the genuineness of a medal, or the disputes of Commentators about the various readings of their ancient manuscripts?

Let us consider the advantages which arise to the world from the study of the liberal Arts.

Mankind in the present state, are extremely liable to be led away by mean and sordid vices, to be attached to the low enjoyments of sense, and thus degraded almost to a level with the brutal creation. As that unceasing thirst for happiness, which is the universal spring of action, must have some object for its gratification; the Divine Being, to raise us above these low desires, hath implanted in our minds a taste for more pure and intellectual pleasures. These pleasures have their source in the fine Arts, and are more especially found in the elegant entertainments of polite Literature. They ennoble the soul, purify the passions, and give the thoughts a better turn. They add dignity to our sentiments, delicacy and refinement to our manners. They set us above our meaner pursuits, and make us scorn those low enjoyments, which perhaps we once esteemed as the perfection of human felicity. I appeal to all persons of judgment, whether they can rise from reading a fine Poem, viewing any masterly work of Genius, or hearing an harmonious concert



cert of Music, without feeling an openness of heart, and an elevation of mind; without being more sensible of the dignity of human nature, and despising whatever tends to debase and degrade it?

These are the delights, which humanize the soul, and polish away that rugged ferocity of manners, which is natural to the uncultivated nations of the world.

In every land, in every age, at the time when the unconquered spirit of freedom, joined with that laudable ambition, which fires the soul to heroic deeds; hath raised the nation to the highest pitch of glory; the fine Arts have been studiously cultivated, and have shined forth with peculiar lustre. For Learning and Glory walk hand in hand through the world. A savage People, before the dawn of literature, may indeed be terrible in arms: but being stained with the blood of cruelty, tarnished with that wild barbarity, which degrades courage into brutality, they never attain to the summit of renown; and either sink unnoticed into oblivion, or leave to posterity a name more infamous for barbarism, than famed for heroic achievements. While every voice celebrates the bravery of an Alexander, a Scipio, a Cæsar, and a Marlborough; who remembers the savage fierceness of the lion-hearted Richard; or what mouth is opened in the praise of that scourge of Asia, the Persian Nadir?

The same ardour of ambition, the same greatness of



of thought, which inspires the Warrior to brave danger in the conquering field, when diffused among a people will call forth Genius in every station of life, fire the imagination of the Artist, and raise to sublimity the aspiring Muse.

Look into the annals of antiquity. View the Grecians at the era of learning and politeness; when the fine Arts were carried to their highest glory, when the whole nation were encouragers of science, and every person a judge of literature; when, by greatness of genius, correctness of taste and refinement of manners, they rendered themselves famous throughout the world, and patterns of imitation to all posterity. Then was the time that Greece produced those Heroes that astonished Europe and Asia with the sound of their victories; then was the time that Athens, Sparta and Thebes gave laws to the world. And could a Nation fail of rising to the highest pitch of fame, when animated with the thundering eloquence of Demosthenes and Pericles; fired to warlike deeds by the martial muse of Homer, and warmed with those noble sentiments which inspire the productions of Æschylus, Euripides and Sophocles?

The glory of Arts and Arms sunk in Greece and rose again with renewed lustre in Hesperia: Rome distinguished herself for literature, even from the first dawn of her greatness. In her early days, while her unpolished manners bore too near a resemblance to the rough virtues of Sparta, she could boast an Ennius, the boldness of whose thoughts even Virgil himself



himself did not disdain to imitate. Then flourished Accius, Nævius, Pacuvius, those famed dramatic poets, with the bold and spirited Lucilius, the father of the Roman satire. But these writers have sunk into the dark grave of oblivion, and left behind only some small traces of their fame. Then appeared the rough genius of Plautus, the milder elegance of Terence, and the soft muse of Catullus: Then the polished Lucretius, so distinguished for all the graces of poetic expression, that Virgil evidently borrowed from his writings, his style, versification and manner of description. In the mean time Eloquence rose to the highest perfection at Rome. Be Cicero a witness, whose praise is unnecessary, whether as an orator, a patriot, or a philosopher.

But see Rome attains to the summit of greatness. The world submits to her sway. Satiated with the spoils of victory, she sits unmolested on the throne, and diffuses the mild blessings of peace. Then flourish the names dearest to fame, the glories of the Augustan age: The majestic Muse of Virgil, the second who dared to attempt the dignity of epic song; the polished elegance of Horace, graced with the sounding lyre, and armed with the keen sword of satire; the strong and sportive imagination of Ovid; the soft elegiac strains of Tibullus and Propertius; and the historic grandeur of Livy. The world is conscious of their fame. Their characters need not to be illustrated by the tedious impertinence of praise.

The

The Glory of Rome faded by a gradual decay.  
 The Muse still shone, though with tarnished lustre,  
 in the tragedies of Seneca, the satires of Juvenal and  
 Persius, and the heroic poems of Lucan, Statius,  
 Claudian, and Silius Italicus. History produced the  
 nervous, the manly Tacitus; and Philosophy could  
 still show her Seneca and Pliny. Till at length Ty-  
 ranny usurped the dominion, and Barbarism over-  
 spread the land of Italy.

For a nearer instance of the trophies of the liberal  
 Arts, let us view the state of Russia in the last cen-  
 tury. In a cold unpolished land, deep-lunk in the  
 shades of savage ignorance, a Monarch rises, who  
 moved with compassion for his subjects, fired with  
 love of glory, and endowed with a soul superior to  
 the age, forms a project of civilizing his country.  
 He sails to other lands; imports the rudiments of  
 the arts, and affords both by precept and example  
 the utmost encouragement to genius. The Nation  
 raises herself from the dust, repels her enemies, ex-  
 tends her borders, leads forth her conquering ar-  
 mies, and now threatens the total subversion of the  
 Ottoman empire.

Britain alone can claim the glory of an equality  
 with Greece and Rome. There for two centuries  
 the Arts have flourished with almost unabated lus-  
 tre: And the slightest reflection will inform us that  
 this period is by far the most celebrated in the Bri-  
 tish history. In the glorious reign of Elizabeth,  
 there arose a Spenser, unequalled in all the pleasing  
 charms of luxuriant description; whose fancy trans-



ports us to fairy land, and brings us acquainted with a shadowy race, the beings of his own creation. Then a Shakespear, the matchless genius of the drama; endowed with the most noble extravagance of imagination, the strongest powers of humour, the sovereign command of the passions, and the keenest inspection into all the mazes of the human soul. To these succeeded the unbridled wit of Cowley, the soft graces of Waller, and the various grandeur of all-accomplished Dryden. Then with the united charms of every Muse, appeared the immortal Milton; who with the greatest force of natural genius, assisted by all the aids of art, and by the noble descriptions of the inspired writers, hath produced a Poem, almost as much superior to Homer's, in sublimity of conception, as it is in the greatness of its subject:

A Genius universal as his theme,  
 Astonishing as Chaos, as the bloom  
 Of blowing Eden fair, as Heav'n sublime.

*Thomson.*

After a short eclipse in the luxurious reign of Charles II. the reviving Arts shone forth with superior brightness in the prosperous days of William and Anne; while the victorious Marlborough bore Britain's thunder on her foes, and made Europe tremble at the sound of his arms. Then flourished the polished muse of Addison, who revived in England the classic elegance of the Augustan age; whose works, adorned with the highest sublimity of sentiment, and the nicest delicacy of thought,

B

filled

filled with easy humour which points the ridicule at vice, (while they afford instruction and entertainment of the noblest kind to every reader,) may boast as their greatest honour and distinguished excellence, that they are peculiarly calculated to please and improve the fairest part of the creation.

Then arose a Swift, the friend of virtue, the scourge of folly, and the terror of vice ; unequalled for manly sense, liveliness of fancy, the powers of wit and humour, and the severest poignancy of satire. Happy, had not his mind, soured with disappointment in the earliest views of his ambition, too often endeavoured by the grossest indelicacy of description to debase the dignity of human nature ; and indulged a spirit of misanthropy, which clouds his best productions, and while we admire the force of his Genius, bids us detest the sentiments of his heart. What age shall forget the undying fame of Pope ! Whether in pleasing strains he paints the beauties of nature ; mourns with the softest notes of elegiac verse ; or with moral rapture unfolds all the principles and passions of the human soul : Whether in sportive lays he displays the foibles of the gentler Sex ; impales vice and dulness on the point of satire ; or holding up the glass of translation, reflects with unabated light the glories of the Mæonian song.

For the power of describing the beauties of rural scenes, and copying the different appearances of nature, what writer can vie with the pleasing Thomson ! The liveliness of his paintings, his sublime  
morality,



morality, and his delicacy of thought justly raise him to the highest rank of genius.

Nor must we forget the unaffected ease of Gay and Prior, the spirited wit of Congreve, the delicate fancy of Parnelle, the dramatic powers of Otway, Southern and Rowe, the cervantic humour of Arbuthnot, with the pointed satire and strong imagination of Young. These writers will convey the English glory to the most distant ages of posterity.

Polite Letters at present are much on the decline in Britain; not through a scarcity of authors, or want of encouragement from the public; but by reason of that luxurious effeminacy, which hath caused a decay of genius, and introduced a false taste in writing. Their Men of learning are infected with pedantry. They are great admirers of antiquity and followers in the path of servile imitation. They sacrifice ease and elegance to the affectation of classic correctness, fetter the fancy with the rules of method, and damp all the ardour of aspiring invention. While the men of Genius (who are at present a distinct class of writers) in contempt of the critic chains, throw off all appearance of order and connection, sport in the wildest fallies of imagination, and adopt the greatest extravagance of humour, which too often sinks to buffoonery, or is soured with the malevolence of satire.

America hath a fair prospect in a few centuries of ruling both in arts and arms. It is universally  
allowed

allowed that we very much excel in the force of natural genius : And although but few among us are able to devote their whole lives to study, perhaps there is no nation, in which a larger portion of learning is diffused through all ranks of people. For as we generally possess the middle station of life, neither sunk to vassalage, nor raised to independence, we avoid the sordid ignorance of peasants, and the unthinking dissipation of the great. The heroic love of Liberty, the manly fortitude, the generosity of sentiment, for which we have been so justly celebrated, seem to promise the future advancement and established duration of our glory. Many incidents unfortunate in themselves, have tended to call forth and sustain these virtues. Happy, in this respect, have been our late struggles for liberty ! They have awakened the spirit of freedom ; they have rectified the manners of the times ; they have made us acquainted with the rights of mankind ; recalled to our minds the glorious independence of former ages, fired us with the views of fame, and by filling our thoughts with contempt of the imported articles of luxury, have raised an opposition, not only to the illegal power, but to the effeminate manners of Britain. And I cannot but hope, notwithstanding some dangerous examples of infamous defection, that there is a spirit remaining in these Colonies, that will invariably oppose itself to the efforts of usurpation and perfidy, and forbid that Avarice should ever betray us to Slavery.

This Land hath already begun to distinguish itself in literature. It is peculiarly famed for the study



study of Theology ; and though too much infested with the short-lived productions of controversy, can boast of some Divines, who however inelegant in style and expression, have perhaps never been excelled in depth of thought and profoundness of reasoning. Our late writers in the cause of liberty have gained the applause of Europe. Many elegant essays have been produced in the style of wit and humour ; nor hath Poetry been entirely uncultivated among us. The encouragement, which is given to the Arts and Sciences, affords a prospect of our future glory.

AND see, th' expected hour is on the wing,  
With ev'ry joy the flight of years can bring :  
The mighty scenes the Muse shall dare display,  
And unborn ages view the ripen'd day.  
Beneath a solemn grove's delightful shade, [play'd;  
When Night's brown wings were o'er the world dis-  
(While the fair moon, that leads the heav'nly train,  
With varying brightness dy'd the dusky plain);  
With joy entranc'd, to solemn thought resign'd,  
Long visions rising in the raptur'd mind,  
Celestial music danc'd along the vale,  
While these blest sounds the ravish'd ear assail.

"To years far distant, and to scenes more bright,  
Along the vale of Time extend thy sight, [pole,  
Where hours and days and years, from yon bright  
Wave following wave, in long succession roll;  
There see in pomp, for ages without end,  
The glories of the western world ascend."

"See! this blest Land in her bright morn appears,  
Wak'd from dead slumbers of six thousand years :  
While

While clouds of darkness veil'd each chearing ray ;  
 To savage beasts and savage men a prey.  
 Fair Freedom now her ensigns bright displays,  
 And Peace and Plenty blest the golden days.

In mighty pomp America shall rise ;  
 Her glories spreading to the boundless skies :  
 Of ev'ry fair, she boasts th' assembled charms ;  
 The Queen of empires and the Nurse of arms."

" See where her Heroes mark their glorious way,  
 Arm'd for the fight and blazing on the day : [plain,  
 Blood stains their steps ; and o'er the conquering  
 'Mid fighting thousands and 'mid thousands slain,  
 Their eager swords promiscuous carnage blend,  
 And ghastly deaths their raging course attend.  
 Her mighty pow'r the subject world shall see ;  
 For laurel'd Conquest waits her high decree."

" See her bold Vessels rushing to the main,  
 Catch the swift gales, and sweep the watry plain ;  
 Or led by Commerce, at the merchant's door,  
 Unlade the treasures of each distant shore ;  
 Or arm'd with thunder, on the guilty foe  
 Rush big with death and aim th' impending blow,  
 Bid ev'ry realm, that hears the trump of fame,  
 Quake at the distant terror of her name."

" For pleasing Arts, behold her matchless charms ;  
 The first in letters, as the first in arms.  
 See bolder Genius quit the narrow shore,  
 And unknown realms of science dare t' explore ;  
 Hiding in brightness of superior day  
 The fainting gleam of Britain's setting ray."

" Sublime the Muse shall lift her eagle wing ;  
 Of heav'nly themes the soaring bards shall sing ;  
 Tell how the blest Redeemer, man to save,

Through



Through the deep mansions of the gloomy grave,  
 Sought the low shades of night ; thence rising high,  
 Vanquish'd the pow'rs of hell, then soar'd above the  
 Or paint the mighty terrors of that day, [sky ;  
 When Earth's last fires, shall mark their dreadful  
 In solemn pomp, th' Eternal God descend, [way,  
 Doom the wide world and give to nature end ;  
 Or ope heav'n's glories to th' astonish'd eye,  
 And bid their lays with lofty Milton vie ;  
 Or wake from Nature's themes the moral song,  
 And shine with Pope, with Thomson, and with  
 "and Young."

"This Land her Steele and Addison shall view,  
 The former glories equal'd by the new ;  
 Some future Shakespearé charm the rising age,  
 And hold in magic chains the listning stage ;  
 Another Watts shall string the heav'nly lyre,  
 And other Muses other bards inspire."

"Her Daughters too the happy land shall grace  
 With pow'rs of genius, as with charms of face.  
 Blest with the softness of the female mind,  
 With fancy blooming and with taste refin'd,  
 Some Rowé shall rise and wrest with daring pen,  
 The pride of genius from assuming men :  
 While each bright line a polish'd beauty wears ;  
 For ev'ry muse and ev'ry grace is theirs."

"Nor shall these scenes our rising fame confine ;  
 With equal praise the Sister-arts shall shine."

"Behold some new Apelles, skill'd to trace  
 The varied features of the lovely face ;  
 Bid the gay landscape rise in all its charms,  
 Or wake from dust the slumbring chief to arms ;  
 Bid Art with Nature hold a pleasing strife,  
 And warm the pictur'd canvas into life." "See

"See heav'n-born Music strike the trembling  
Devotion rising on the raptur'd wing." [string ;

"See the gay Dome with lofty walls ascend,  
Wide gates unfold, stupendous arches bend,  
The spiry turrets pointing to the skies,  
And all the grandeur of the palace rise."

"Then the bold pow'rs of Eloquence shall reign,  
And bind the passions in their magic chain ;  
At Freedom's voice bid manly bosoms glow,  
Or prompt the tender tear at guiltless woe."

"Thus o'er the happy Land shall Genius reign,  
And fair Yalensia lead the noble train."

Oh ! born to glory when these times prevail,  
Great Nurse of learning, blest Yalensia, hail !  
Within thy walls, beneath thy pleasing shade,  
We woo'd fair Science, that celestial maid.  
Fate gives no more those raptures to pursue,  
Borne from thy seats we bid a last adieu.  
Long mayst thou reign of every joy posselt,  
Blest in thy teachers, in thy pupils blest,  
To distant years thy fame immortal grow,  
Thy spreading light to unborn ages flow :  
Till Nature hear the great Archangel's call,  
Till the last flames involve the smoking ball ;  
Then thy fair Sons to happier climes ascend,  
Where Glory never fades, and Joys shall never end.











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